



BLUFFTON POLICE DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

TO: All Bluffton Police Personnel

FROM: Joey Reynolds
Police Chief

RE: October 2015 Survey – Chiefs Response

DATE: November 25, 2015

The purpose of this memorandum is to respond to the October survey questions. I want to thank everyone for their questions and my hope is we can use this survey to get information out, as well as address any concerns you may have about issues affecting our department and workspace. I have addressed all of the questions I felt required a response. I have also included all of the survey comments at the end of my response so you know we have received your comments.

I hope the survey serves as another way to increase communication flow in our department. Please let me know if you have any suggestions for improving this process and anything else that will make the Bluffton Police Department a better place to work.

Thank you to those who sent me your thoughts and suggestions in October's Survey. Many of you shared a common theme. Therefore, I would like to address this matter first.

Questions 1, 7, 8,13,12,22

Chief's Response:

It appears there is a concern, of some, that there is a lack of confidence among the command staff, which in turn, is affecting the morale of the entire department. This is a concern I take very seriously. Keeping morale at a positive level is something I have strived to do since taking the position as Chief more than three years ago and something I will constantly pursue.

As a result of some feeling morale has been hindered from the actions and comments of others, Major Manning and I spent a week conducting numerous interviews with the command staff, sergeants, as well as other department members. At the conclusion of those interviews, we found there are areas of improvement involving our command staff and department that are being addressed.

It sounds trivial, but necessary that we are all reminded occasionally; speak to others, as you would want to be spoken to and with respect and professionalism. In order for all of us to serve and protect

this community, we must first look at ourselves. It is imperative we are a team inside these walls, so when we go out on the street, the community trusts us.

The issues that were of concern in the survey and in the interviews are being addressed and will continue to be a work in progress. I want to let all of you know it is being dealt with. We hope by addressing these concerns head-on, a difference will be noticed among the entire department. I will be addressing this in more detail at the upcoming all-hands meeting.

Question 3

"Yes, this concerns payroll and the In-Time sheet. I don't understand why we would sign a payroll sheet when officers cannot correct what is in stone by the LT's schedule either to add or delete something like FLEX Time and PTO... TOO CONFUSING. Thank You"

Chief's Response:

I am not sure exactly what the question here is, but Sergeants and above have been placed in In-Time as a daily User. This means they have the permissions to cancel and/ or add something to the schedule. Sergeants and Lieutenants have the ability to adjust your times, approve officer's activity and leave requests; add to the officer's schedule and cancel (delete) from the officer's schedule. When it is time for the officer to complete payroll, and they find the time sheet (in In-Time) is not correct, they will need to get with their Sergeant and let him know the time sheet is wrong. That way he or she will know to review In-Time to make sure they approved all of the officer's activity and/or leave requests and adjust anything else they need. Once the Sergeant has fixed the time, the officer should review their time sheet again for accuracy, then sign.

Please do not sign a time sheet if your hours are not correct.

As for FLEX time, we can understand your confusion. FLEX time will show on the officer's schedule as leave BUT it does not go towards their PTO bank. It just removes those hours from the time sheet so they do not get paid for them. We needed to be able to track how often FLEX time (when an officer is going to adjust his hours to alleviate over time) is used and that is why you will start seeing it on your schedule.

I hope this helps. If anyone has any questions in regards to this please feel free to ask Trinity and she will help you.

Question 9

"Just wanted to ask about the future plans for the Bluffton Police Department with obtaining a K-9/K-9 Unit. I have heard that it is something that is in the works but wanted to hear it first hand. Thank you in advance. All else is great."

Chief's Response:

The idea of us adding a K-9 Program is not a rumor; we are in fact looking at trying to start a K-9 Program in the near future and will be putting it in our budget for the upcoming year. This does not mean it is a sure thing. It does mean we recognize a need and will be looking at funding opportunities to see how we can start implementing a program. Exactly what it would look like is still in the planning stages. If you have any specific knowledge or interest in assisting with the planning part of the project, please forward to Major Manning through your chain of Command.

Question 18

"Sir, I know there was some discussion about implementing a physical fitness plan/requirement for the department. Has there been any further action on this?"

Chief's Response:

There has not been any activity on this lately; it is on the radar to look at in the near future. There are many different legal, policy and procedure implications that have to be ironed out before we can implement. I certainly encourage all members of the department to be health conscious and to maintain a level of fitness to be able to handle the stress and physical demands of any law enforcement profession.

Question 26

"Has there been any consideration in contracting civilian translators like what the military use? We have a large Hispanic community and having a civilian translator may break down some barriers between the public and the police. (Similar to what our Chaplains do for us) This would also be faster and cheaper than recruiting an officer and sending them through the academy."

I certainly agree with you on the need to have the ability to communicate with our Hispanic population. We have certainly recognized this and have tried several different avenues to assist. We have tried to hire officers who have language skills as well as adding another Hispanic Chaplain. We are also in the process of establishing a Hispanic Tip Line as a way for further outreach with our Hispanic Community. As far as hiring civilian translators to help officers in the field we can certainly look at that as another solution. However, this would have a budget impact. We need to figure out if there is a significant need to go this route and how we would fund it.

At this point, I feel these two Chaplains combined with the Hispanic speaking officers that we have will help when necessary. The suggestion of hiring a civilian translator is very good and I will keep this idea in mind.

Question 27

"Chief, I feel this new pursuit policy is a terrible mistake. It won't take long for the criminal element to figure out if they don't stop driving then we won't mess with them. And what about someone who is already driving reckless before we initiate a stop? Do we just allow them to continue putting others at risk? I understand we may have needed to adjust our policy but I believe this was an over reaction. Most of the people who run are running for a reason...they have drugs, guns, or bot"*

Chief's Response:

I have addressed my position on the chase policy in last month's survey. As I explained then, I knew the changes in the pursuit policy were not going to be popular with some officers. However, that was a risk I was willing to take to protect your lives and those of the motoring public. The existing policy in my opinion put our officers in a horrible position of having to make a decision that left them totally responsible for the decision to pursue vehicles for minor traffic offenses.

Yes, there is that possibility that bad guys will get away. However, if the policy were to stay the same, there is a stronger possibility that an officer or innocent bystander could be injured or killed. We are here, ultimately to protect the community. Sometimes that means not catching every single bad guy, but rather, maintaining a feeling we are out there keeping the streets as safe as possible without causing a more dangerous environment for the residents of Bluffton.